Cranbrook Timber Supply Area
Rationale for Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) Determination

Effective January 8, 2004

Background

The most recent full timber supply review for the Cranbrook TSA under section 8 of the *Forest Act* was conducted in 1999 and 2000, marked in particular by the release of a timber supply analysis report in December 1999 and an AAC decision released in December 2000. At that time, I determined an AAC of 871 000 cubic metres for the TSA. Of this AAC, 838 000 cubic metres is attributable to the timber harvesting land base, and the remainder partitioned as follows: 1) 380 hectares to problem forest types; and 2) 230 hectares for fire-maintained ecosystem restoration.

The decision outlined in this rationale is also informed by the results of the 1999 timber supply analysis and subsequent AAC determination in December 2000.

In the summer of 2003, the province of British Columbia experienced one of the worst fire seasons in recorded history. Wildfires damaged extensive areas of timber, including areas within the Cranbrook TSA. British Columbia Forest Service (BCFS) Rocky Mountain forest district staff have provided me with an estimate that indicates about 22 400 hectares of Crown land within the Cranbrook TSA was burned. Approximately 11 300 hectares of this area was timber harvesting land base (corresponding to 2.7 percent of the total timber harvesting land base in the TSA). Two-thirds of the burned area was covered in stands 80 years of age or less (age classes 1 to 4), and the remaining area was mature timber. Thus, approximately 3850 hectares of mature timber in the TSA that had been assessed in the most recent timber supply review to be merchantable was damaged or destroyed by fire.

Under section 8(8)e of the *Forest Act*, in making an AAC determination I am required to consider abnormal infestations in and devastation of, and major salvage programs planned for, timber on the area. For the Cranbrook TSA, I have been asked to consider a temporary AAC increase in order to support the issuance of licences to ensure timely implementation of the salvage programs planned for the 2003 wildfires.

Reasons for Decision

I note that salvage of wildfire-damaged timber is time limited, as the economic value of the timber declines over time until it becomes uneconomic to harvest (or unmerchantable). It is difficult to state with certainty, but general experience in recent years indicates that the affected timber will become unmerchantable after about three years, and overall merchantability is expected to decline within the next one to three years. I also am mindful that the Ministry of Forests places priority on the salvage of fire-damaged timber, as salvage harvest reduces the economic loss associated with the wildfires, and as well facilitates the more rapid establishment of new productive stands. BCFS district staff inform me that opportunities for salvage of the timber from the burned areas have been assessed, and that salvage from stands is imminent. Staff further note that the existing licensees are harvesting some of the damaged stands but that the volume

planned for salvage cannot be entirely accommodated within the existing AAC for the Cranbrook TSA.

With regard to section 8(8)e of the *Forest Act*, I am aware that in mid-December, the Minister of Forests issued an invitation to the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council to apply for two non-replaceable forest licences under Section 47.3 of the *Forest Act*. A condition of the licences includes that volumes qualifying for harvest will be limited to fire-damaged timber within the Cranbrook (and Invermere) TSAs.

District staff have estimated that the total volume on the timber harvesting land base of the Cranbrook TSA that was damaged by the 2003 wildfires is approximately 1.1 million cubic metres. Only a portion of this volume will be salvageable due to several factors, including the age, location, and residual merchantability of the stems. A review of the salvage opportunities indicates that an additional volume of about 210 000 cubic metres in total over the next three years would provide the flexibility needed to effectively harvest the salvageable timber values.

I expect, given existing forest practices legislation, that any considerations regarding the environmental sensitivity of rehabilitating the fire-damaged stands will be appropriately addressed operationally and do not require discussion in this rationale. I also note that district staff have indicated that the burned areas cover portions of the timber harvesting land base not related to the two partitions described in the 2000 AAC determination. As such, I note that this temporary AAC increase does not affect the partitions to problem forest types or for fire-maintained ecosystem restoration.

The defined forest area management (DFAM) licensee group has voluntarily agreed to complete the new timber supply analysis for the Cranbrook TSA before April 1st, 2004. Therefore, a further determination for the Cranbrook TSA under section 8 of the *Forest Act* is expected to occur late in 2004 or early in 2005. At that time, I will review the timber supply in the TSA, including the increased salvageable and unsalvageable losses as a result of fires.

At this time, my considerations are also in accordance with section 8 but place extraordinary emphasis on section 8(8)e, which provides the expectation that in determining an AAC I must consider abnormal infestations in and devastation of, and major salvage programs planned for, timber on the area. In consideration of the information provided to me, and the necessity for an immediate response to the request given the circumstances discussed, I am satisfied that it is appropriate to increase the AAC for the Cranbrook TSA at this time by 70 000 cubic metres to a total of 941 000 cubic metres, effective January 8, 2004. This temporary AAC increase is expected to be required for a three-year period, but will be reviewed again during the next full section 8 determination for the Cranbrook TSA.

L. Ped

Larry Pedersen,
Chief Forester
January 7, 2004

Appendix 1: Section 8 of the *Forest Act*

Section 8 of the Forest Act, Revised Statutes of British Columbia 1996, reads as follows:

Allowable annual cut

8 (1) The chief forester must determine an allowable annual cut at least once every 5 years after the date of the last determination, for

(a) the Crown land in each timber supply area, excluding tree farm licence areas, community forest areas and woodlot licence areas, and

(b) each tree farm licence area.

(2) If the minister

(a) makes an order under section 7 (b) respecting a timber supply area, or

(b) amends or enters into a tree farm licence to accomplish the result set out under section 39 (1) (a) to (d),

the chief forester must make an allowable annual cut determination under subsection (1) for the timber supply area or tree farm licence area

(c) within 5 years after the order under paragraph (a) or the amendment or entering into under paragraph (b), and

(d) after the determination under paragraph (c), at least once every 5 years after the date of the last determination.

(3) If

(a) the allowable annual cut for the tree farm licence area is reduced under section 9 (3), and

(b) the chief forester subsequently determines, under subsection (1) of this section, the allowable annual cut for the tree farm licence area,

the chief forester must determine an allowable annual cut at least once every 5 years from the date the allowable annual cut under subsection (1) of this section is effective under section 9 (6).

(3.1) If, in respect of the allowable annual cut for a timber supply area or tree farm licence area, the chief forester considers that the allowable annual cut that was determined under subsection (1) is not likely to be changed significantly with a new determination, then, despite subsections (1) to (3), the chief forester

(a) by written order may postpone the next determination under subsection (1) to a date that is up to 10 years after the date of the relevant last determination, and

(b) must give written reasons for the postponement.

(3.2) If the chief forester, having made an order under subsection (3.1), considers that because of changed circumstances the allowable annual cut that was determined under subsection (1) for a timber supply area or tree farm licence area is likely to be changed significantly with a new determination, he or she

(a) by written order may rescind the order made under subsection (3.1) and set an earlier date for the next determination under subsection (1), and

(b) must give written reasons for setting the earlier date.

(4) If the allowable annual cut for the tree farm licence area is reduced under section 9 (3), the chief forester is not required to make the determination under subsection (1)

of this section at the times set out in subsection (1) or (2) (c) or (d), but must make that determination within one year after the chief forester determines that the holder is in compliance with section 9 (2).

(5) In determining an allowable annual cut under subsection (1) the chief forester may specify portions of the allowable annual cut attributable to

(a) different types of timber and terrain in different parts of Crown land within a timber supply area or tree farm licence area, and

(b) different types of timber and terrain in different parts of private land within a tree farm licence area,

(c) [Repealed 1999-10-1.]

(6) The regional manager or district manager must determine an allowable annual cut for each woodlot licence area, according to the licence.

(7) The regional manager or the regional manager's designate must determine a rate of timber harvesting for each community forest agreement area, in accordance with

(a) the community forest agreement, and

(b) any directions of the chief forester.

(8)In determining an allowable annual cut under subsection (1) the chief forester, despite anything to the contrary in an agreement listed in section 12, must consider

(a)the rate of timber production that may be sustained on the area, taking into account

(i)the composition of the forest and its expected rate of growth on the area,

(ii)the expected time that it will take the forest to become re-established on the area following denudation,

(iii)silviculture treatments to be applied to the area,

(iv)the standard of timber utilization and the allowance for decay, waste and breakage expected to be applied with respect to timber harvesting on the area,

(v)the constraints on the amount of timber produced from the area that reasonably can be expected by use of the area for purposes other than timber production, and

(vi)any other information that, in the chief forester's opinion, relates to the capability of the area to produce timber,

(b)the short and long term implications to British Columbia of alternative rates of timber harvesting from the area,

(c)Repealed [2003-31-02]

(d)the economic and social objectives of the government, as expressed by the minister, for the area, for the general region and for British Columbia, and

(e)abnormal infestations in and devastations of, and major salvage programs planned for, timber on the area.

1998-29-2;1999-10-1; 2000-6-2; 2002-25-21;

2003-30-01; 2003-31-02